



Embassy of the United States of America
100 Duke & Young Streets, Kingston, Georgetown, Guyana

Ask the Consul Installment One Hundred Twenty Diversity Visa Fraud

This *Ask the Consul* article addresses services offered to U.S. Citizens present in Guyana, as well as Guyanese and nationals of other countries interested in traveling in to the United States or its territories.

Question: I just received a call that I won a U.S. green card. All I have to do is pay \$500 for visa processing. Is this true?

Answer: If someone calls or emails to tell you that you have won the diversity visa lottery, be careful! Scammers may contact non-U.S. citizens and tell them that they have won the Diversity Visa lottery and instruct them to wire money. Individuals who applied for the diversity visa lottery will not receive a notification letter or email from the U.S. government, but instead, must check their status online at <http://www.dvlottery.state.gov/>.

Websites that end in the domain “.gov” are U.S. government websites. The information they contain about visas is official and correct. Information on other websites is not official, and may be incorrect! Some websites and emails attempt to mislead the public into thinking they are official U.S. government websites, by using images of the U.S. flag, the U.S. Capitol building, etc. This is also true of emails that come from addresses that do not end in “.gov.” All official U.S. government email addresses end in “.gov.” Websites that end in “.com,” “.org,” or “.net” may provide legitimate and useful information, and they also may not; it may be out-of-date, incorrect, or even, fraudulent. Always be careful when dealing with any companies that claim to offer advice and assistance with visa services.

If you or someone you know is trying to get a “green card” — the right to live in the United States permanently — be on the lookout for unscrupulous businesses and attorneys. Some of these fraudulent organizations may require payment for purported immigration and visa services. If payment is made to a non-governmental source, this payment is not received by the U.S. government and does not apply toward visa processing. Sometimes these costs are for information or forms that are otherwise available for free on official U.S. government websites. Many fraudulent emails promise U.S. visas or “green cards” in return for a large fee. These non-governmental, unofficial organizations are not able to provide these services. These services can

only be obtained from official U.S. government entities, such as the Department of State, a U.S. Embassy or Consulate, or the Department of Homeland Security.

Finally, be wary of providing any personal information through these fraudulent websites and emails, since such action could result in identity fraud or theft. Visa applicants are strongly advised to be cautious in all dealings with non-governmental companies that claim to offer any assistance in obtaining U.S. visas.

Beginning November 1, 2011, the Embassy will no longer accept the old national ID cards for entry, you must obtain a new Voter ID card before your appointment.

“Ask the Consul” is a bi-weekly column from the U.S. Embassy answering questions about U.S. immigration law and visa issues. If you have a general question about visa policy please email it to us at AskGeorge@state.gov. We select questions every other week and publish the answers in Stabroek News and on our website at <http://georgetown.usembassy.gov/ask-the-consul.html>. Information about visas and travel can be viewed at <http://georgetown.usembassy.gov>, <http://travel.state.gov>, and at <http://www.dhs.gov>. Applicants are strongly encouraged to prepare their own documents and avoid third-party advice from “visa consultants” or “visa agents.” U.S. Consular rules change frequently and non-US government advisors often provide inadequate or inaccurate information.

Other than the questions we select, we DO NOT respond to questions sent to Ask the Consul. Please contact the visa inquiries unit (email visageorge@state.gov or call 225-7965 between 8 am and 4 pm Monday through Friday) if you have questions about a specific case.